

## How the British Food Controller Works

In a recent address before the Montreal Canadian Club Lord Northcliffe, the head of the War Commission to the United States, gave a very graphic description of the co-operation between the British Food Controller and the local authorities in putting into force the measures to conserve the food of the country. It is a similar co-operation that was urged at the London Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. The address reads partially as follows:

"Briefly, the aim of Lord Rhondda, the British Food Controller, is to safeguard the interests of the consumer, to do away with profiteering altogether and to prevent excessive profits of any kind. The framework of our machinery is formed on the famous British civil service. They are the administrators, but in all cases in the ministry of food, we secure the best available business men to advise the civil servants, as well as a number of expert committees dealing with almost every food commodity. The policy is to limit profits at every step, from the producer to the consumer, and at the same time regulate supply. A costing department, under the direction of chartered accountants, has been set up, through which the profits made by any manufacturer of food, or any retailer of food can be ascertained.

"Great Britain has been divided into separate areas, in each of which a leading firm of accountants has been appointed by this department to do the necessary work. Reasonable profit, based on pre-war rates, is added to the present cost, and price limits agreed on that basis after consultation with the representatives of the trades concerned. Decentralization is obtained by dividing Great Britain into sixteen food divisions. Each division is under the superintendence of a commissioner appointed by the food controller. The borough, urban or rural district councils, or other local authorities appoint local food committees with limited powers, and certain discretion, to carry out such regulations as regards price and distribution, as may be issued from headquarters. Local storekeepers are registered with their local committees, and if any storekeeper does not carry out regulations and orders he may be struck off the register, and put out of business. The various orders fixing or amending the maximum prices of meat, milk, potatoes, bread, etc., are communicated to the local committees, and the trades and public are informed through the daily and trades press. A staff of inspectors is kept at headquarters and a number of sentences have been imposed by magistrates throughout the country in contraventions of the regulations. The general penalty is a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or a term of six months' imprisonment with or without hard labor, or both. One fine of twenty-five thousand dollars has been upheld for potato profiteering. This punishment may be inflicted for every several offences. It is proposed to make the penalties more severe.

While the price of practically all essential foods are now under control, no compulsory rationing is imposed on the general public although all restaurants and boarding houses are rationed as to the amount of meat, flour, bread and sugar which may be used in any week on the basis of an average for each meal. After December 13, only half pound of sugar per capita will be permitted. This will be obtainable through a system of each consuming household, or consumer registering with a specific retailer and securing from the local food committee a card entitling his household or himself to the ration.

The retailer will keep a record of his deliveries to ensure his not supplying any one customer in one week with more than the proper allowance. Arrangements for the issue of these cards are in progress and they will form the groundwork, should it become necessary to ration other foodstuffs. There are many restrictions in manufacturing. Flour made from wheat must be straight run flour milled to eighty one extraction. It is compulsory to mix in twenty per cent of flour from other cereals and pulse and permissible to mix it up to fifty per cent wheat. No bread may be sold unless twelve hours old. Following on restrictions of fifty per cent and forty per cent manufacturers are now restricted to the use of only twenty-five per cent of the amount of sugar they used in 1915. Malting from any cereal or the use of malt for any purpose except so far as permitted by the food controller is forbidden, and brewers are restricted as to the amount of very weak beer they may brew.

"Speaking generally the use of foodstuffs for industrial purposes, and for the feeding of animals has either been

restricted or prohibited. Waste of bread is a criminal offence. Appeals for economy in consumption have been made and a new campaign is being organized to this end. The maximum price of the quarter loaf has been reduced to eighteen cents for cash over the counter. It was only found possible to do this by subsidizing flour. It was found necessary to control practically all essential commodities.

"The danger that in introducing prices we may restrict supplies and increase consumption is obvious, but our food controller thinks it can be largely overcome. It has been suggested that our recent fixing of meat prices will lead to excessive slaughtering. If it does Lord Rhondda is in a position to control the transport of meat, and he is taking steps to license the slaughter houses. A condition of the license will be that no more than a certain number of cattle are slaughtered per week. He also proposes to control the sales through the auctions and he can limit the quantity there. In the course of a month or two he hopes to be able to determine approximately what quantity of meat ought to go to each industrial area, and to limit the quantity if necessary. Maximum wholesale meat prices for the whole kingdom have been fixed, independently of the cost of transport. He hopes to meet the danger that producing areas, because of this, might get more than their fair share of supplies by fixing a flat railway rate.

"As regards nearly all imported commodities, adequate distribution is being secured, as the sole control is in the hands of the Government, and importers or wholesalers are required to supply in fair proportion the needs of their usual customers."

### CANADIAN ANNUAL REVIEW.

Last year we reviewed in these columns Mr. Castell Hopkin's fifteenth edition of his Canadian Annual Review. One feature of the work that specially commended itself to us was the clear perspective that the author gave to his readers of Canada's part in the great war. This year, in his sixteenth volume that has just been published, Mr. Hopkins, evidently appreciating the fact that since the people have sacrificed so much in the great cause and consequently entitled to know how other nations are faring, has gone further and presented a general review of the world situation towards the war—the position of the Central Powers; their economic conditions and peace proposals; their war measures, etc. The Great Powers of the Entente; the Balkans and Japan. The war policy and general position of the Empire in 1916; Ireland's part in the war as affected by the rebellion; the neutral nations, etc.

Coming back to Canada the author deals very fairly with the war problems affecting the country, and in particular his chapter on the attitude of French-Canada towards war is well worth reading, not only by the student but by every Canadian, be he or she French or English speaking. Each of the Provinces is dealt with separately, showing the many war activities of the different centres, and the political aspect of and progress made by each government.

As far as the municipalities as units are concerned Mr. Hopkins has given little or no recognition to their war activities. It is true that some of the municipal councils might have done more, but others have done splendid work, and in all the municipalities the attitude of the local authority has affected the war activities of the community. So that in suggesting, as we did in reviewing the 1915 edition, that Mr. Hopkins take up this—the municipal—phase of Canada's part in the war in a future edition, we are confident that he would be well repaid for his labor and no doubt will be surprised at the results. In purely civic affairs the story of the Berlin-Kitchener issue is the only question dealt with, though the Hydro-Electric development and its problems take up part of the review.

Taking the sixteenth volume of the Canadian Annual Review as a whole we would say that it is 828 pages of good reading and quite equal to its predecessors. The work is informative and fair, and the articles, all of which are from the pen of Mr. Castell Hopkins, well written, and no Canadian desirous to know all about the war and where Canada stands, as well as the internal affairs of the country, and a perspective of its activities can afford to do without it. The volume is published by the Canadian Annual Review Co., Toronto.